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LEGAL ACTION OF WISCONSIN, INC.

PRIORITY PLAN -- 2006

I. INTRODUCTION

Legal Action of Wisconsin, Inc. (Legal Action) is a non-profit corporation providing free civil legal services to low-income clients in Adams, Brown, Buffalo, Calumet, Columbia, Crawford, Dane, Dodge, Door, Fond du Lac, Grant, Green, Green Lake, Iowa, Jackson, Jefferson, Juneau, Kenosha, Kewaunee, La Crosse, Lafayette, Manitowoc, Marquette, Milwaukee, Monroe, Outagamie, Ozaukee, Racine, Richland, Rock, Sauk, Sheboygan, Trempealeau, Vernon, Walworth, Washington, Waukesha, Waushara, and Winnebago Counties. Legal Action also serves migrant farmworkers throughout the State of Wisconsin and elderly individuals, regardless of income, in Milwaukee and six other counties.

This document is the Legal Action Priority Plan for 2006. The purpose of this plan is to assist Legal Action's Board of Directors, local Community Advisory Committees and staff in allocating resources to provide the most economical and effective delivery of legal assistance to persons throughout our service area.

This plan is based on the suggested priorities promulgated by the Legal Services Corporation; an appraisal of the needs of eligible clients in the geographic area served by Legal Action; the resources of Legal Action; the availability of other free or low-cost legal assistance or other advocacy services in particular categories of cases or matters; the availability of other sources of training, support, and outreach services; the relative importance of particular legal problems to Legal Action's client community; the general effect of the resolution of particular categories of cases or matters on Legal Action's client community; the susceptibility of particular problems to solutions through the legal process; whether legal efforts by Legal Action will complement other efforts to solve particular problems in Legal Action's service area; and whether legal efforts will result in the efficient and economic delivery of legal services.

II. LEGAL ACTION PRIORITY PROCESS -- A HISTORY

In 1979, the Legal Action Board of Directors adopted a priority-setting process which involved a number of steps designed to assure that the Board of Directors and local Program Committees received maximum input from the client community, from Legal Action staff, and from other interested persons in developing the plan.

at the surplus food distribution sites in Legal Action's service area. In addition, the proposed 1989 Priority Plan was mailed to individuals and organizations with an interest in low-income issues and to numerous bar associations and attorneys.

In January of 1991, Legal Action held a firmwide staff meeting wherein staff members discussed general issues affecting Legal Action, including priorities. Staff members concluded that Legal Action should be more involved in education law, that it should be more vigorous in its attempt to reach out to the client community, and that it should work to lift clients out of poverty.

From 1991 through the autumn of 1992, Legal Action engaged in an extensive strategic planning process. A part of this planning process was the commissioning of a survey of past and potential clients to ascertain what were the most compelling legal needs of our clients. The staff members, Board members and Program Committee members also set forth in the Strategic Plan a "Community Presence" goal, which is to revitalize the community's awareness of Legal Action and its services. This goal calls for vigorous strategies to increase the community presence of Legal Action.

Another goal, that for the mix of service and impact work done by Legal Action, is:

To expand our resources for improving, changing and creating access to, crucial systems within our society for low-income persons by providing an effective mix of legal services that responds to both individual need and the need for societal change.

Among the strategies under this goal is the recognition of the need to operate, when appropriate, outside the areas of housing, welfare and family law. The Strategic Plan provides that Legal Action is to establish a formal mechanism for considering major cases outside these priority areas. At present, that formal mechanism is that issues are raised at monthly Saturday meetings. If a case or project appears advisable, the Executive Director consults with staff, a prelitigation memorandum is drafted and, if the case or project appears advisable, it is undertaken.

Another step under this goal was to establish a Priority Plan Committee to discuss whether there should be a revision in our priorities, and this Committee was to consider the results of the client and potential client survey. We did so and that Priority Plan Committee produced a draft Priority Plan, which was then submitted to the staff, the Board and the other agencies and organizations set forth in the LSC regulation governing priority-setting.

In 1996, Legal Action commissioned another client survey in order to update our assessment of the most critical client legal needs. Over 600 client-eligible persons were surveyed, by telephone and through interviews at community service agencies. That survey was completed in late 1996, and is one source of